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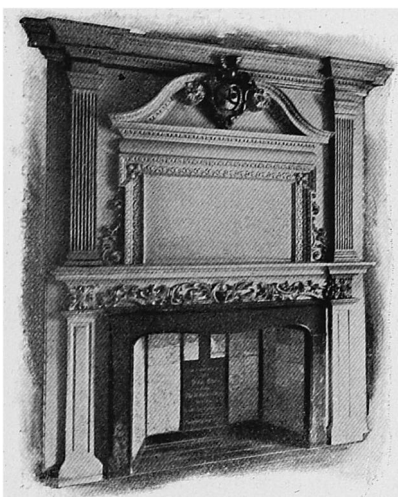
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THE ART SIDE OF GEORGIAN NEW YORK

We of to-day are apt to have a very distorted idea of the art side of colonial life. The severities suffered and practiced by the pilgrims seem to have dominated the popular conception of this period. We are prone to associate these early days with danger and distress, penury and toil, a paucity of the amenities of life, and a superabundance of those experiences that characterize a lot endurable, but not desirable. As a matter of fact, remote as the New World was from

the Old, it was near enough to keep in touch with the fashions and fancies of Europe, and as a consequence New York under the Georges had an art side little inferior to that which obtained in the old settled communities beyond the Atlantic.

A work recently published* properly lays emphasis on the artistic and social conditions of the prosperous classes in New York from 1714 to 1776, which is sometimes known as the Golden Age of New York, extending from the accession of George I. till the outbreak of the Revolution. Other writers have taken pleasure in describing the humble side of life in the then little city, with the Dutch *vrouw* at her spinning-wheel and the goodman on his settle at the fireside. In the work referred to, Esther Singleton



DRAWING-ROOM MANTEL, BEEKMAN HOUSE
From "Social New York"
Copyright, 1902, by D. Appleton & Co.

ignores this lowly side of life in Manhattan, and presents an elaborate picture of the fashionable life that revolved around Fort George.

In point of fact, the metropolis of to-day finds its natural prototype in the little town by the Hudson before the Revolution. Before the colonies threw off the British yoke New Yorkers were characterized by the same race for wealth as now, and they were just as pleasure-loving as money-making. Luxuries were brought from the ends of the earth to satisfy the tastes of prosperous New York people. Their

* "Social New York under the Georges," by Esther Singleton. D. Appleton & Co.



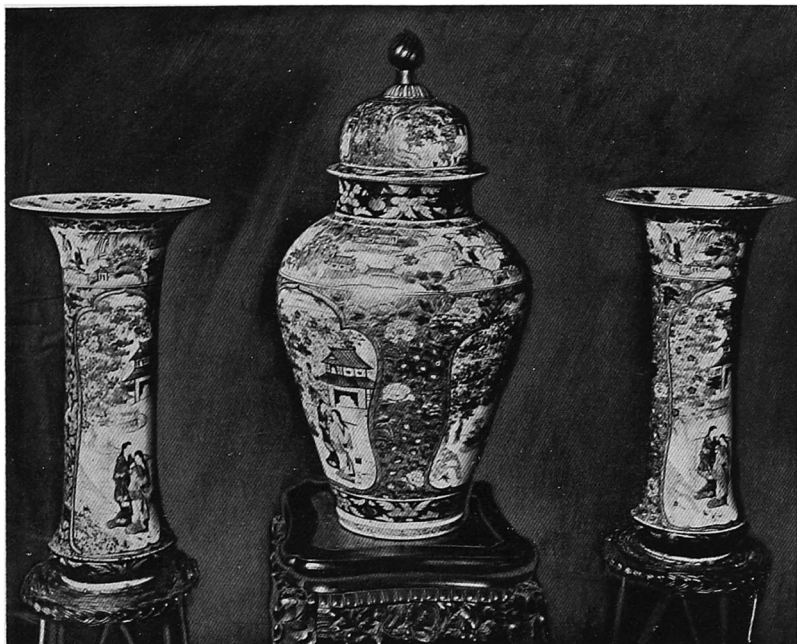
A BELLE OF NEW AMSTERDAM

Enlarged from an Old Print

Reproduced from BRUSH AND PENCIL, October, 1900

homes were appointed with every convenience, and they dwelt in a delightful setting of meadows and woods with a water frontage unsurpassed anywhere else in the world. There were breathing spaces and pleasant vistas all around them, and these they sought to preserve and embellish. It would be well if the same practice now prevailed.

The picture, therefore, which the author presents is one of luxury,



COVERED JAR AND TWO BEAKERS OF HIZEN WARE

From "Social New York"

Copyright, 1902, by D. Appleton & Co.

and one reads with a relish her description of the houses the early New Yorkers lived in, the contents of their various rooms, their plate, glass, and china, the delicacies with which their tables were supplied, the gardens and domains in which they took their pleasure, the clothes they wore, the music they sang and played, the plays, exhibitions, and shows they attended, the public and private fêtes, dinners, balls, and assemblies at which they gathered, and the field-sports in which they indulged.

Manhattan even in these early days was not merely a mart of commerce: it was a center of culture and a home of art—a bit of

Europe dropped down in the wilderness in which the better class of people had more concern in their immediate surroundings than in the little known territories just beyond their ken.

The people, to begin with, were jealous of protecting the natural beauties of their island home. The city was mostly built upon the East River, on account of the harbor. In many of the streets there were rows of trees on each side to afford shelter from the heats of summer. Most of the houses were built of brick, strong and neat, and several stories high. Many of them had balconies on the roof, where companies sat in the summer evenings to enjoy the prospect of the opposite shores and harbor.

An evidence of luxury. The streets were paved and clean, though generally very narrow. The authorities of the city were possessed of civic pride, and enacted many laws to keep the city neat and attractive. All inhabitants of houses, or owners of lots fronting on any street, lane, or alley, were commanded, at the expense of the landlord, to pave the walk in front and keep it in repair. People were prohibited from casting into the streets, docks, or slips ashes, oyster-shells, or any kind of carrion

or filth, and from encumbering the streets with building material. Indeed, one of the early enactments required that the inhabitants "shall on every Friday rake and sweep together all the dirt, filth, and soil lying in the streets before their respective dwelling-houses, upon heaps, and on the same day, or on the Saturday following, shall cause the same to be carried away and thrown into the river or some other convenient place."

Open places, even within the narrow confines of the city, were not inconsiderable. Besides gardens, there were meadows that



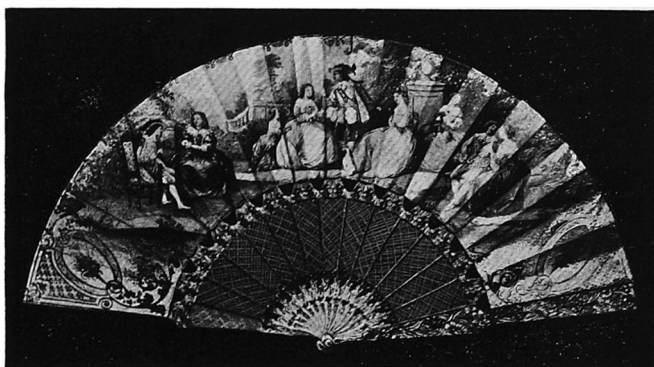
PEWTER TANKARD



DELFT PLATE—ORANGE AND BLUE
Showing Chinese Influence

were not occupied with houses, and one of the commonest forms of complaint was of the encroachments on the common rights of citizens by individuals. The pleasure which the people took in their gardens is constantly in evidence. These gardens were laid out according to the national or individual tastes of the owners. In the early years of the century the formal Dutch garden predominated, but as the English, French, Italian, and Chinese garden came into vogue abroad, people of wealth and fashion in New York eagerly adopted the new styles. Capable gardeners were thus in demand.

The style of architecture was unique and not without its attractions, and special provisions were made to secure the erection of substantial buildings. Indeed, in 1774 it was announced that the



FRENCH FAN OF THE PERIOD

From "Social New York"

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money arising from the laying of a tax on dogs and cats in the city and county should be given as a bounty for the making of tile for covering houses. Almost seventy years before this Madame Knight, on visiting New York, noticed that the bricks in the houses were of various colors and arranged in patterns, and she remarked upon the tiled hearths and mantel-trees, and noticed that the staircases were even laid with white tile—a witness of the Dutch origin of the town.

Attractive and delightful as the city itself undoubtedly was, the country beyond was still more charming. Manhattan Island—and Staten Island, the Jersey shore, and Long Island as well—was dotted with country-seats, mansions, and farm-houses pleasantly situated on fine grounds. In many cases these estates were comparatively small in area, as their owners did not depend on farming for a living, but had offices, shops, or counting-houses in New York. The great majority of the wealthy citizens, as Miss Singleton points out, were

interested in the shipping business, directly or indirectly. Everybody tried to make money, and ladies of the best families had shops



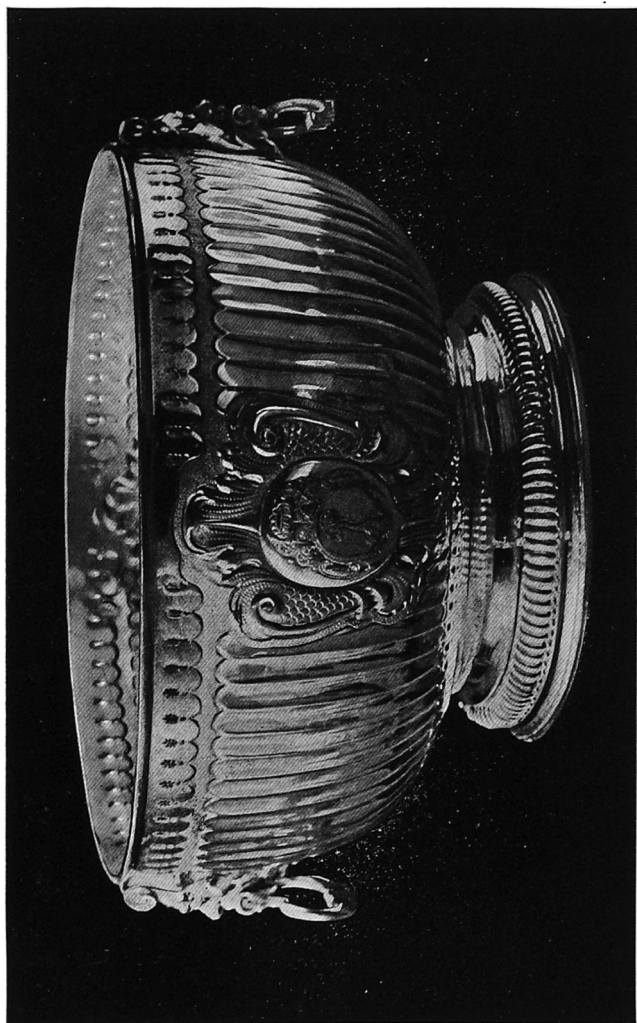
CHIPPENDALE SECRETARY AND BOOKCASE

From "Social New York"

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of their own. Ease and luxury at home were cultivated, and in most cases the mansions were situated within reach of all that earth, forest, and sea could yield. Life was thus cast on very pleasant lines.

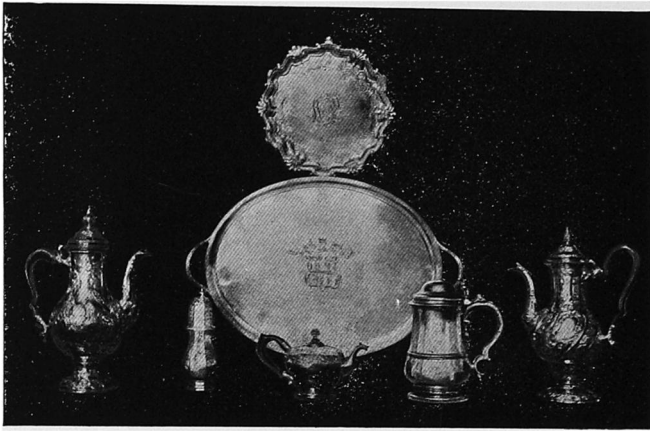
Wealth was rapidly accumulated, and men spent it lavishly on



SILVER PUNCH-BOWL (1704)
From "Social New York"
Copyright, 1902, by D. Appleton & Co.

their homes and persons. Thus, though fortunes in those days were comparatively small, the men went richly and fashionably dressed, their wives wore dresses of choice material and had costly jewelry, their walls were adorned with fine pictures by Dutch masters, their tables were bright with massive silver, and their rooms were full of fine furniture of English, Dutch, and Oriental manufacture.

Queen Mary is generally credited with setting the taste in England for porcelains and other Eastern wares when she had shelves and cabinets fitted up in Hampton Court, on taking up her residence there in 1690; but long before this porcelain and lacquer ware were found in New York houses, and sometimes in considerable quantities. As the English element began to predominate, merchants of that



SILVER OWNED BY COX AND ALEXANDER FAMILIES
From "Social New York"
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nation grew rich in increasing numbers, and luxury and fashion became more pronounced. This is not surprising, since many of the immigrants were men of birth, breeding, and education, and accustomed to the best that wealth and fashion could give.

Bellomont, for instance, was a friend of King William; Cornbury was a royal rake of the first order; Hunter was a wit and beau; Burnet was a friend and supporter of the House of Hanover before the accession of George I.; and all the other governors, including De Lancey, had been accustomed to the best society and familiar with kings' courts. The picture so often drawn of the good wife spinning in the kitchen, which formed the general living-room of the house, is therefore misleading when we are dealing with the wealthy class. The woman of wealth was then the lady, as now.

The ordinary modest house of the period was of two stories, with a basement. On the first floor were two rooms, used for the parlor and dining-room, occasionally divided by glass doors. Upstairs were three bedrooms, the extra one, of course, being a small one over the entry. In the basement were the cellar-kitchen and wine-cellar. The kitchen was usually in an additional back building of two stories, the upper one reserved for the negro slaves. Frequently the house had a wing fitted up as an office.

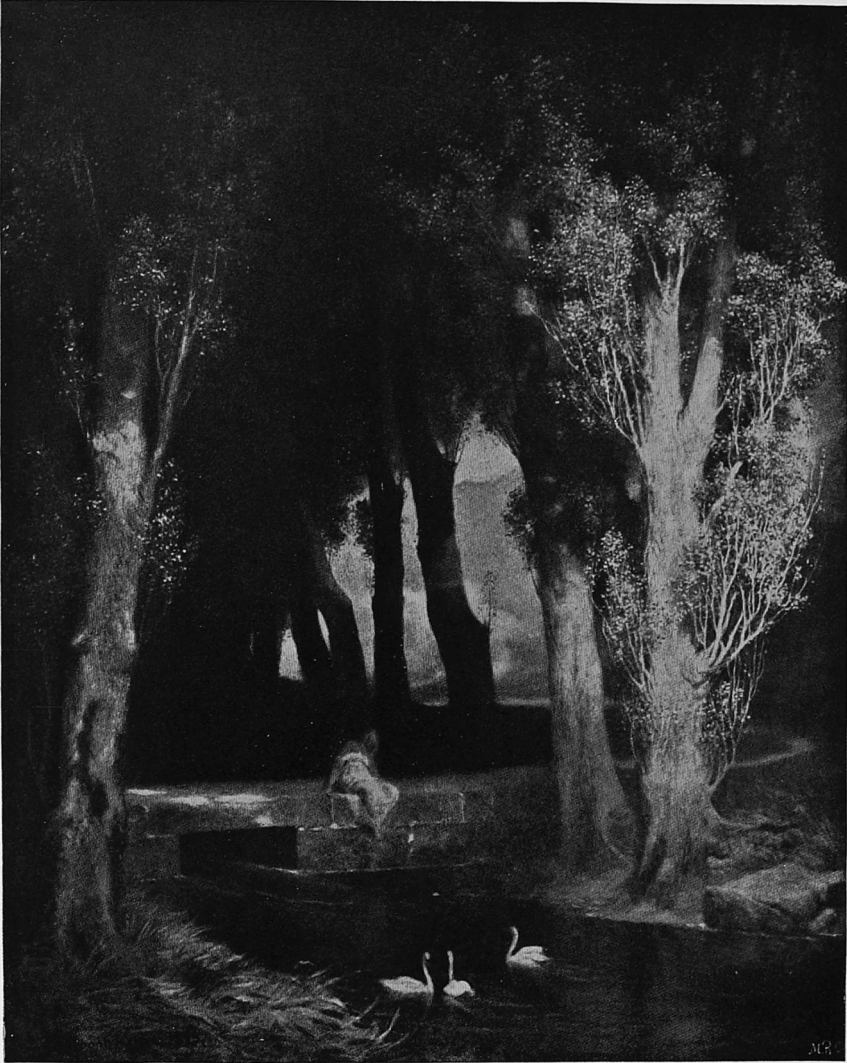
Into houses of this type representative art products of the world were brought in generous quantities. The people of New York had every opportunity to furnish their homes handsomely.

Ships brought each week the newest articles in furniture and ornament from London. Any one who had the means and took pride in living in the best taste could easily keep up with the European fashions. Cabinet-makers and upholsterers were a numerous race. New artisans were constantly arriving. They had learned their trade from English cabinet-makers, and were ready to make up "gentlemen's goods" at the shortest notice in accordance with the latest fashions.

These artisans—I am indebted to Miss Singleton's entertaining book, with its wealth of facts and illustrations, for the details here cited—made chairs, easy-chairs, settees, couches, all sorts of cabinets, escritaires, desks, bookcases, chests of drawers, tables of all kinds, etc. The styles of chairs most fashionable throughout the period were designs that Chippendale was fond of making, and there is every reason to suppose that the New York cabinet-makers produced them in large numbers, as they did the other kinds of furniture then in vogue.

Apart from the efforts of the local cabinet-makers and upholsterers, the merchants and importers, to supply New Yorkers with fashionable furniture and other luxuries and comforts, there was still another means by which the homes of the period could be richly stocked with choice articles. Many opportunities were afforded by the public vendue or auction. Households broke up then as suddenly as now; death sometimes removed the head of the family, but more often the British officers and those in authority were transferred to other stations and preferred to sell their household effects rather than to carry them home or move them. When one remembers the custom that English people have of taking such a vast number of belongings into the wilds, it will not require much imagination to believe that when they came to New York—a comparatively easy journey—they did not hesitate to transport a shipload of articles.

As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century the walls of houses were usually paneled, painted, or whitewashed. In the homes of the rich tapestry and gilt leather hangings were found. When Kalm visited New York in 1748 he noticed that the rooms were wainscoted, that the woodwork was generally painted a bluish gray,



LANDSCAPE—DECORATIVE OIL-PAINTING
By Ferdinand Keller



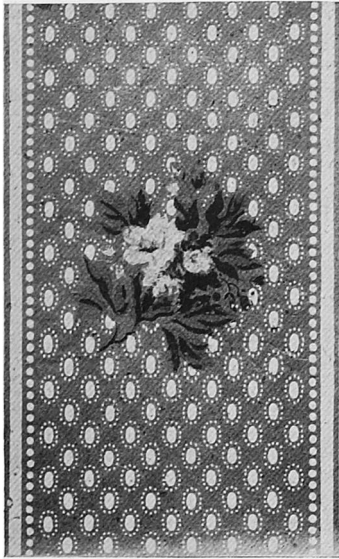
and that the people seemed to be slightly acquainted with hangings. Two years later wall-paper was imported. Mantelpieces were among the chief features of the main living-rooms, and these were often elaborately carved with the arms of the owners or with conventional designs. It was not until about 1750 that carpets became general. At first carpets were used as coverings for tables, but from 1757 Turkish, Scotch, and Wilton carpets were imported in profusion, and in 1771 Axminster appeared.

In a period in which Chippendale and his school flourished, it is not to be wondered at that the chimneypiece, the mirror, the cornice, the bracket, the sconce, and the girandole should have been of the utmost importance. At the beginning of the century the Dutch style of carving was in vogue; and under the Georges the carving naturally enough conformed to the tastes that had been formed by Grinling Gibbons and his school. Mahogany, black walnut, and other choice woods were used, and often the effectiveness of the carving was enhanced with gilding.

The great four-poster beds were the glory of the chambers, and these were not infrequently luxurious in the richness of their damask hangings. The curtains at the windows always matched the bed-hangings, and thus the designations, "the red room," "the yellow room," "the blue room," "the green room," etc., became common. It goes without saying, of course, that hair-cloth, which survived as a horror even to comparatively recent times, was at the height of its popularity.

Not less worthy of consideration from an art standpoint are the table furnishings of these early days. China and porcelain of fine quality were common in Manhattan before the English satirist attacked the china mania. The Dutch, as is well known, were among the very first china collectors in Europe, and it is certain that the Dutch ships constantly arriving in New Amsterdam imported wares of this nature.

It must be remembered, too, that the various English potteries were then in their full glory. The Elers were working near Burslem, producing a red ware similar to Japanese pottery, salt-glaze and black ware; at Burslem Aaron Wood, Thomas Whieldon, and John Mitchell were turning out yellowish white and cream-colored salt-glaze, tortoise-shell, cauliflower and melon ware, and agate ware. Wedgwood was improving every variety, in partnership with Whieldon, and later with Bentley. Liverpool, Worcester, Leeds, Yorkshire, Chelsea, Plymouth, Bow, Lowestoft, Swansea, and other noted English potteries were at the period of their greatest activity. Choice specimens of all these different makes found their way to the New World and served to decorate the better class of homes. Oriental ware, moreover, was then as popular as it was subsequently. Dinner services, teapots, cups and saucers, vases, etc., came from Canton and Nankin, as in modern days. Further examples of this kind of art work need



WALL-PAPER
From Old Dutch House on Long Island

scarcely here be cited—the reader who wants ampler details can profitably consult Miss Singleton's entertaining and instructive book.

From the first settlement of this country wrought silver was always highly prized, and every prosperous householder possessed his pieces of plate. Silver spoons, forks, goblets, beakers, salt-cellars, porringers, pepper and spice boxes, sugar-bowls, candlesticks and candelabra, ewers, basins, salvers, and the thousand and one other articles into which the precious metal is wrought, were then as now in common use. Like the china, the plate was often kept in cupboards specially made for its display. Besides the plate imported from France, England, and Holland, a considerable quantity was manufactured in this country. On the revocation of the Edict of Nantes many of the best

workers in the precious metals left France and settled in Holland, Germany, and England, and not a few of them crossed the Atlantic. These artisans thus came with their Old World training, and the product of their shops compared favorably with the best wares of Europe. Still the ultra-fashionable, then as now, had a craze for imported goods, and even before 1700 we find English settlers sending their plate to London to be refashioned according to new styles. Artistic perception had little to do with this custom. Sometimes the new fashions were inferior in beauty to those they supplanted. The mere fact that an article was old-fashioned lowered its value.

The pewter which we of to-day so highly prize as relics was then in common use, and in the homes of the rich and middle class New Yorkers its place was in the kitchen, where it was arranged on dressers. Glassware of the finest quality was also early used in New York, as appears from the inventories which were then commonly kept. As early as 1762 we find mention of a new importation, which consisted of "neat flowered wine and water glasses; glass salvers; silver-topped cruet-stands; a few neat and small enameled shank wine-glasses; flowered, scalloped, and plain decanters; jugs and mugs; salver and pyramids; jelly and sillibub glasses; flowered, plain, and

enameled wine-glasses; glasses for silver, salts, and sweetmeats; poles with spires and glasses; smelling-bottles; sconces; tulip and flower glasses of the newest pattern; finger-bowls and tumblers of all sorts." It will thus be seen that even in these early days, the tables of the well-to-do boasted of as rich a display of choice art work or artistic manufacture as do those of to-day.

Nor was pictorial art overlooked in Georgian New York. Generally speaking, walls were hung with pictures painted on glass, mezzotints, and engravings. Occasionally portraits were found, and in many of the houses of New Amsterdam were oils that to-day would be priceless. The fashionable pictures came from England, and an invoice dating from 1760 will give a good idea of the popular subjects. James Rivington, of Hanover Square, announces that he has "just imported a very fine collection of pictures of various sorts, consisting of the heads of all the principal persons who daily distinguish themselves by their virtues at home or victories abroad; of very elegant views, landscapes, maps, and charts; horses, birds, hunting pieces; prospects of London, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Peterborough; elegant buildings in Poland, Prussia, the East Indies, Madrid, Lisbon, Bristol, Edinburgh, Rome, Palmyra, and Athens; a complete set of the celebrated beauties of Hampton Court; 'The Harlot's Progress'; Hemkirk's humorous pictures; Monamy's famous sea pictures; pictures for watches; copies to teach to write the round text; the large and small round hands, black lines, letter-files, etc." A suggestive assortment.

There is a general impression that people on this side of the Atlantic

s c o r n e d
dress and
fashion in
c o l o n i a l
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t h a t t h e
beau, if not
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THE FALCON-CHASE
Brass Panel from Oak Chest

New York closely followed London fashions. There was just as much art displayed in dress then as now. Indeed, the beau of early Manhattan was a gorgeous creature compared with the corresponding type of person at the present time, and the belle of the period was no less enamored of the beautiful in dress, no less a slave to fashion, than is the belle of to-day. In a word, society then had the same proclivities and the same opportunities for indulging tastes as in these latter days when New York has become the metropolis of the New World.

I have drawn liberally in this article from Miss Singleton's lately published work, since, as stated at the outset, it presents a phase of early American life which is commonly overlooked, and which is naturally of interest to students of the art side of our early American life.

WALTER D. FRANKLIN.



FAMOUS MASTERS OF LINE ENGRAVING

The following six examples of line engraving, reproduced here by courtesy of Albert Roullier, are thoroughly representative of an art now virtually dead. Nanteuil, Masson, Drevet, Wille, Sharp, and Morghen were all among the most famous engravers of their day, and their work is eagerly sought by collectors and connoisseurs. The plates herewith presented are among the best sent out from their studios. Nanteuil enjoyed the patronage of Louis XIV., and in the forty-eight years of his life executed no less than two hundred and eighty plates. That of Pomponne de Bellièvre has been declared by experts the finest engraved portrait in existence. Masson's masterpiece is probably the portrait of the so-called "Gray-haired Man," here shown. The work of Drevet, himself the son of a celebrated engraver, is fairly uniform in quality, but the portrait of Bishop Bossuet and that of the beautiful and ill-fated tragédienne, Adrenne Lecouvreur, are considered his best. Wille excelled particularly in representing the brilliancy and softness of silk and satin draperies. In none of his plates is the delicacy of his art shown to better advantage than in "The Traveling Musicians," after Dietrich. Sharp was one of the most celebrated of the English engravers. Charles Summer says, "His works are constant in character and expression, with every possible excellence of execution—face, form, and drapery—all are as in nature." His "Diogenes" is one of the famous prints of the world. Probably no engraver has had a larger following of admirers than Morghen, which is due partly to his soft and captivating style and partly to his excellent judgment in the choice of subjects. He had numerous imitators and pupils, of whom Folio and Bettelini are perhaps the best.